

# Boston's Friend

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Do you have an imaginary friend? Did you once have one, but no longer remember them? They remember you. Oh yes, they never forget their unimaginary friend. I am Boston's imaginary friend - or Playmate as I prefer, for I am certainly not imaginary. I will always be his friend. Even if he forgets.

Boston has started growing up and forgetting me. Well, he's always been growing up, I know that. But now it's different.

I still remember when he first found me. He was playing alone with his toy dinosaurs. The cuddly, dark haired boy. He froze suddenly as he realized someone was watching. He looked up slowly and met my eyes. And smiled. It all went from there.

That is my first memory.

I still remember when he - we first found out that his name was a place, a city. Oh the adventures we had in Boston's Boston. The dragons we rode, the princesses we rescued, the feasts and deserts we ate. I remember those.

But he doesn't.

I still remember when we first went to school. The big fifth graders. Both the nice and mean teachers. The strange food that tried to eat us instead. How he was teased for having an "imaginary" friend just because they never found their own Playmate.

I remember all the drawings we made with crayons and finger paints. Especially the painting he made of me and wrote my name under it. "Bill." That is when I knew my name for the first time.

People say not to dwell on the past. Not to remember the old feelings. Out with the old and in with the new, they say. But I think differently.

I believe that it is very important to remember. Things will disappear if someone forgets them. Me for example. Or a dilapidated but still awe-inspiring stone church. Or a soldier's grave. Or a promise. Or a thousand other things.

If people forget these, they fade and crumble away.

Do not dwell on grudges, but remember old times.

Now I watch as Boston gets married to a beautiful, red-headed woman named Wendy. He is soon to have a child of his own. I am weak now. It is a miracle, some would say, that he remembers me even now, if only faintly.

I was looking through old scrapbooks of our drawings and paintings and I found his smudged picture of me. His Bill. His friend. I am much weaker than before as Wendy has given him two children now.

Twins. Max and Amelia. They are beautiful.

I put the painting of me on Boston's desk one day and waited for him to find it. For the briefest moment while he stared at it in confusion I felt a change. My strength pulsed and my heart began to hope.

But *hope*, hope is dangerous and it was not to be. He tossed the memory into the trash. I felt a physical blow to my chest as the drawing landed in the wastebasket. Discarded. Unwanted. But not *quite* forgotten.

I grew a hundred times more tired and drained of hope as I scooped up the painting and pressed it to my heart.

Max and Amelia are four years old now. Max has his mother's red hair and his father's eyes. Amelia is the spitting image of her grandmother.

To my joy, they both have found their own Playmates. Gumball Machine and Starhead, both are lovely, lively youngsters. The four will tear around the house yelling until they collapse in exhaustion or Wendy sends them outside.

The twins will have a joint birthday party soon. Both are brimming with excitement.

I have decided to do something about Boston's forgetfulness. I do not know if it will work, but what's the harm in trying?

During the birthday party, while Wendy and her children were busy welcoming guests, I used the last of my strength to heave a heavy old scrapbook onto his bed.

I waited until Boston came in to get something and pushed the bedroom door shut. Then I flipped open the scrapbook and watched my boy's face carefully.

Would this weak attempt succeed or fail? Would he remember? His fingers traced over the pictures as he flipped through page after page.

He remembered, in the shallow sense of the word. But would he come through?

Boston sat down on the bed and flipped to the last page. He mouthed the word "Bill." A smile tugged at his lips.

He froze, suddenly aware of my gaze. His eyes travelled slowly upwards to meet mine. And he smiled.

My strength returned in soft waves and I felt better than I had in many years. And I knew it would be okay. No matter what came to pass in the future, it would be alright. I, at least, would remember.

Boston stood and we hugged.

My heart swelled after being left to wither for so long. Joy surged and washed over my whole being as I looked at my old friend.

But our embrace was cut short as Amelia charged into the bedroom, shouting about someone's dog that had gotten loose. She pulled her father out by the hand, but before I lost sight of him, Boston gave me the thumbs up.

But, as often is the case, I was mistaken. At least partly.

Boston soon began to forget me again.

I was partly correct in that everything would be okay. It was. I was alright with Boston forgetting. I have realized that it makes sense, deep inside. Nothing lasts forever. It was just part of nature, part of life.

Max and Amelia are seven years old now.

My strength is draining again. But I do not mind. I truly do not know why I resisted this before. I knew it was inevitable. Every Playmate eventually fades. It is the routine of creation. It is a miracle I have lasted this long besides. Most don't last past their unimaginary friend's 13th or 14th birthday.

It would be selfish besides, to hold on to him any longer. He has a family now. He would be alright without me.

I often find myself sleeping in strange places and have difficulty waking up. Gravity, which previously let me float about as I wished, is now pressing ruthlessly onto my body.

Max and Amelia are almost ten now.

Boston has been taken to the hospital several times for heart failures. I am too far gone to follow him there, but Gumball and Star tell me that he isn't doing so well. He will be okay. Wendy will be okay and so will Max, Amelia, Gumball, and Star. We will all be okay in the end. Maybe bruised and sad, but not broken. We will carry on and it will be okay.

One day, I cannot rise. Gravity has become too strong and I can hardly see my own hand before my face, it is so faded. Gumball and Star huddle around me. I know this is my end. I will pass on to wherever the finish line is.

Wendy is at work, the children are in school and Boston in the hospital again. I am alone with my fellow Playmates.

Gumball buried her face in her hands and Star looked away, tears in his eyes as I shivered and lost more solid matter.

I placed a hand on each of their arms and told them that it would be okay. This is how it worked. They didn't need me anymore. They would survive.

I said my goodbyes and words of comfort, then leaned back and closed my eyes.

And now as I feel myself beginning to fade completely, I must say adieu to you, my reader as well.

Farewell, and thank you for enduring my story. Please remember that it will be okay in the end, no matter what happens. We will not be broken.

Goodbye, whoever you are, and live your life to its fullest. Persevere through hardships and preserve your memories.

### **Do Not Stand At My Grave And Weep.**

Do not stand at my grave and weep

I am not there. I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.

I am the diamond glints on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.

I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush I am the swift uplifting rush

Of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry;

I am not there. I did not die.

**-Mary Elizabeth Frye**